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## **‘British is professional, American is urban’: attitudes towards English reference accents in Spain**

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The spread and diversification of English worldwide challenges the use of reference accents in EFL classrooms. Yet, learners often demonstrate greater recognition of, familiarity with and preference for inner-circle varieties of English speech, especially Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GenAm). This paper investigates the attitudes of 71 university students in Spain towards these speech varieties. Using the verbal guise technique, it measures cognitive, affective and conative responses to speech stimuli. Qualitative comments, collected using questionnaires and interviews, help to interpret these evaluative responses. The findings suggest a desire to emulate RP, often associated with status and prestige, though greater solidarity and stronger affiliative feelings towards GenAm speakers. They highlight the complexity and dynamism of the language attitudes of EFL learners in the Spanish context.

*Keywords:* EFL, reference accents, language attitudes, verbal guise, Spain

La difusión y diversificación del inglés a lo largo del mundo cuestionan el uso de acentos ‘estándares’ en las clases de ILE. Sin embargo, con frecuencia los estudiantes muestran mejor reconocimiento y conocimiento de y preferencia por variedades de habla inglesa del llamado círculo interior: en particular, la Received Pronunciation (RP) y el General American (GenAm). Este artículo investiga las actitudes de 71 estudiantes universitarios en España hacia estas variedades de habla inglesa. Utilizando la técnica de ‘verbal guise’, el artículo compara respuestas cognitivas, afectivas y conativas a los estímulos verbales. Comentarios cualitativos, recogidos por medio de cuestionarios y entrevistas, ayudan en la interpretación de las respuestas evaluativas. Los resultados indican el deseo de emular a la RP, frecuentemente relacionada con el estatus y el prestigio, aunque hay mayor solidaridad y sentimientos afiliativos más fuertes hacia los hablantes del GenAm. La investigación recalca la complejidad y dinamismo de las actitudes lingüísticas de estudiantes de ILE en el contexto español.

*Palabras claves:* ILE, acentos ‘estándares’, actitudes lingüísticas, ‘verbal guise’, España

### **Introduction**

Since the 1960s, linguists have been investigating attitudes towards language in order to ascertain the ways in which language functions as a carrier of social meaning. This area of study has focused primarily on attitudes towards the English language. Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh (2006: 23) note that English is

currently ‘the indisputable world language’; as such, its many varieties attract, and arguably merit, a great deal of attention. The global status held by English provides opportunities to investigate the linguistic variation that exists across, and within, its varieties, as well as the social-psychological phenomena underlying how varieties of the language and the speakers, societies and cultures they represent are perceived.

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the attitudes of first-language (L1) speakers of English towards its many speech varieties and in the attitudes of second-language (L2) speakers towards ‘inner-circle’ varieties of English speech (Kachru 1985). Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GenAm) have received the most attention, overall. These are often portrayed as uniform and unchanging, when, in fact, they are neither. RP has been shown to have many forms: Gimson (1962) identifies conservative, general and advanced RP, and Wells (1982) distinguishes between mainstream RP, upper-crust RP, adoptive RP and near-RP (as reported in Macaulay 1988). GenAm has no identifiable community of speakers, no distinct set of features, and is easier to define by what it is not (eastern or southern speech) than by what it is (Preston 2008). In the EFL literature, these idealised speech varieties are characterised as ‘reference accents’ or pronunciation ‘norms’, ‘targets’, ‘goals’ and ‘models’ (Dziubalska-Kolaczyk and Przedlacka 2008). Here, I will refer to them using the least ideologically loaded term: ‘reference accents’.

A prevailing limitation of language attitude studies is that they rely on general, one-dimensional definitions of ‘attitude’. They rarely acknowledge the complexity of the construct by distinguishing between its various components. In emphasising that attitudes are not unified and coherent but, rather, complex and dynamic constructs, I aim to gain greater insight into what language attitudes are and how they function within an EFL context. This paper investigates the attitudes of Spanish EFL learners towards RP and GenAm speech, focusing on the nuances present in their evaluative responses.

## **The sociolinguistic status of English in Spain**

Spain can be categorised as an ‘expanding circle’ context (Kachru 1985), as its indigenous languages – *castellano*, *catalán*, *valenciano*, *gallego* and *vasco* – perform all internal functions and English serves as a language of international communication. English is seen as a lingua franca and as useful for fulfilling career purposes (Ibarraran, Lasagabaster and Sierra 2008). In fact, its status and functions within Spain are increasing: ‘[a] growing acceptance of English as an essential tool worthy of investment, difficult economic conditions, and a pro-English government are all driving more people to study English with greater intensity than ever before’ (Education First 2013: 29). Though Spain has been lagging behind its European neighbours, recent data suggest that the average proficiency level amongst adults has moved from ‘low’ to ‘moderate’ (Education First 2011–2015). This is partly an outcome of recent changes in language policy.

Since 2005, networks of official language schools have been created, bilingual schools established, the number of class hours devoted to EFL teaching increased and study, training and exchanges abroad offered to teachers. Since 2007, it is compulsory for children to learn English from the age of six, though some regions implement EFL teaching from as early as the age of three. In 2010, it became compulsory for all university graduates to have attained a B1 level of English (according to the Common European Framework of Reference). A number of exchange programmes and institutional agreements also support the promotion of EFL in Spain.

There are no official guidelines stating which variety(-ies) of English should be taught in Spain. The fact that around three-quarters of EFL teachers in Spain are L2 users (Henderson, Frost, Tergujeff, Kautzsch, Murphy, Kirkova-Naskova, Waniek-Klimczak, Levey, Cunningham and Curnick 2012) may imply the use of a nativised Spanish variety of English over any particular reference accent(s). However, only a small percentage of teachers opt for an accent that is recognisably Spanish yet completely intelligible (Walker 1999). Though the promotion of reference accents in EFL contexts is often viewed by linguists as outdated and unnecessary, teachers and learners are often unsatisfied with having a 'foreign' accent and strive to emulate a 'native' accent convincingly (Mompeán González, 2004: 244). Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) noted that 68% of their sample of Spanish university students favoured native-speaking tutors, providing further evidence of a native-speaker ideology within this context.

Language attitude studies offer invaluable insights into the status held by English, as well as the motivations, goals and preferences of EFL learners. As such, this investigation into the attitudes of Spanish EFL learners towards RP and GenAm may have implications for the teaching of English pronunciation in this context.

## **Attitudes and accents**

Language attitudes are usually defined as evaluations (pro-con) of speech varieties and their speakers. Speech and speaker are inextricably linked; evaluations of the former reflect evaluations – including judgements and stereotypes – of the social group(s) to which the latter is thought to belong (Garrett 2010: 15). This definition identifies an evaluative process and the object(s) of that process but does not provide a framework for understanding exactly what the process involves. Attitudes are more than instantaneous, context-dependent evaluations. They are stable dispositions to react favourably or unfavourably to the attitude object(s) (Sarnoff 1970). Yet, as they are abstract and elusive, many language attitude studies 'hardly touch on theoretical issues regarding the nature of the objects or concepts to which they pertain' (Agheyisi and Fishman 1970: 141).

Here, I adopt a mentalist approach to 'attitude' by conceptualising it as an internal state of readiness that guides behavioural responses and is inferred from introspection and self-reporting (see Agheyisi and Fishman 1970; Cooper

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and Fishman 1974; Eagly and Chaiken 1993 for discussions). Within this paradigm, 'attitude' has a tripartite structure comprising cognitive, affective and conative components. Cognitive responses are thoughts and beliefs, reflecting perceptions of, and information about, the entity under evaluation. Affective responses exhibit feelings and emotions towards the entity, and are invariably the strongest component (Perloff 2003). Conative responses reveal perceptions of one's own behavioural tendencies towards the entity, which are subjective and may not reflect actual behaviour. The working definition of 'language attitude' here, then, is one's evaluation of and disposition towards a speech variety and its speakers, consisting of thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies.

The study of language attitudes developed from Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum (1960), who presented French and English-speaking Canadians with recordings in both languages and asked them to rate each speaker according to physical attributes, as well as mental and emotional traits. Listener-judges were unaware that they were actually evaluating the same speaker in different guises. This 'matched guise technique' was designed to indirectly elicit underlying prejudices towards the two languages and their speakers. Lambert's later investigations (Anisfield, Bogo and Lambert 1962; Lambert, Gardner, Olton and Tunstall, 1968; Tucker and Lambert 1969) and the plethora of studies that have since emerged have confirmed that non-linguists can differentiate between language varieties and do hold stereotyped attitudes towards them (McKenzie 2010).

Investigations into the attitudes of L1 English speakers towards varieties of English speech have shown that accents perceived to be closer to the so-called 'standard' tend to be rated more positively for competence (also termed 'status' or 'prestige'). Conversely, so-called 'non-standard' accents tend to be rated more positively for social attractiveness (also termed 'solidarity'). Speakers of standard accents have been perceived to be more intelligent, more confident, higher achievers and to have jobs with higher status, whilst speakers of non-standard accents have been thought to be more honest, reliable, trustworthy, likeable, friendly and to have a greater sense of humour (see, for example, Strongman and Woosley 1967; Cheyne 1970; Garrett, Coupland and Williams 1999; Giles 1971a, 1971b; Coupland and Bishop 2007). These findings provide folk linguistic perspectives on correctness, authenticity and prestige, whilst linguists maintain that standard language is, ultimately, an ideological construct (Bex and Watts 1999; Lippi-Green 2012).

Most investigations into the attitudes of L2 English speakers have focused on the language as a single entity: attitudes towards the spread of English in Italy (Pulcini 1997); attitudes towards the functions of English in Finland (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja 1998); attitudes of English teachers in Hong Kong (Tsui and Bunton 2000); and those which have compared attitudes towards English and other languages in Belgium (Dewaele 2005), Hungary (Dörnyei et al. 2006) and Brazil (El-Dash and Busnardo 2001). In Spain, studies have been conducted with learners of English at primary school (Cenoz and Lindsay 1996), secondary

school (Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner and Reyes 2004; Ibarraran et al. 2008) and university (González Ardeo 2003; Lasagabaster 2005), focusing mainly on the perceived usefulness of English and finding a positive correlation between language attitudes and language achievement.

Some investigations have elicited attitudes towards varieties of English speech amongst L2 speakers in the L2 context. For example, Eisenstein (1982) investigated attitudes towards 'Standard', 'Black' and 'New Yorkese' Englishes amongst learners with different L1 backgrounds living in New York. Also, Clark and Schleef (2010) investigated attitudes towards varieties of British English speech amongst Polish adolescents living in Edinburgh and London. Both found that learners living in the L2 context acquired, to varying degrees, the attitudes of L1 speakers; notably, they acquired beliefs linking standard speech with prestige.

Several studies have focused on attitudes towards varieties of English speech amongst L2 speakers in the L1 context: for example, in Austria (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck and Smit 1997); Denmark (Ladegaard 1998; Jarvella, Bang, Jakobsen and Mees 2001; Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006); Finland (Hartikainen 2000); France (Flaitz 1993); Japan (McKenzie 2010); Norway (Rindal 2010); and Poland (Janicka, Kul and Weckwerth 2008). Within Spain, the only small-scale study of this type was conducted with 66 first-year English philology students at the University of Murcia (Mompeán González, 2004). Overall, these have revealed trends regarding the recognition of, degree of familiarity with and preference for varieties of English speech, as well as their social and cultural meanings.

L2 speakers of English generally report a greater ability to recognise, and greater familiarity with, RP and GenAm than other varieties of English speech. When investigating attitudes towards American, English, Irish and Scottish speech in Denmark, Jarvella et al. (2001) found that American and English varieties were most easily recognisable. Increased recognition rates of these two speech varieties – above General Australian, Scottish Standard English and Cockney – were also apparent in another study in Denmark (Ladegaard 1998). Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) found that learners in Austria were more familiar with RP than GenAm.

Greater levels of familiarity with RP and GenAm in EFL contexts, including Spain, are an outcome of learners having greater exposure to these through audio materials, textbooks, pronunciation manuals and websites. Mompeán González (2004: 253–4) notes that 'more than 95% of the books and audio materials [sold online] are based on GA, RP or both' and that these speech varieties monopolise the EFL domain owing to the availability of full phonological descriptions. However, as intimated earlier, RP and GenAm are notoriously difficult to characterise in terms of their phonology. Thus, it is more likely to be the social, cultural, political and economic power of the USA and UK that consolidates these as dominant speech varieties.

L2 speakers generally state a preference for inner-circle varieties of English speech. This preference is often inherited from teachers who see it as desirable



to achieve a 'native-like accent' (Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997) and promote RP and GenAm as suitable reference accents for doing so (e.g., Janicka et al. 2008). Mompeán González (2004: 253) observes that, in university settings in Spain, 'RP is still the default pronunciation model'. This parallels findings throughout Europe that 'RP remains the variety of English which teachers claim to use, whilst recognizing that General American might be preferred by some students' (Henderson et al. 2012: 6). Walker (1999: 26) found that 66% of EFL teachers in Spain desired to have 'either RP or a standard British accent' and 75%, overall, desired to have a native accent. He interprets this as evidence that a 'near-native level of English pronunciation is just as desirable for teachers as a perfect command of grammar or vocabulary' (Walker 1999: 27).

Learners, too, indicate preferences between these speech varieties. RP emerges as the most desirable reference accent in Poland, for example (Janicka et al. 2008). It is also the 'unsurpassed prestige variety' in Denmark (Ladegaard 1998: 265) and in Norway (Rindal 2010), with learners in the latter context rating it more positively than GenAm for competence but rating GenAm more positively for social attractiveness. In contrast, Jarvella et al. (2001) found 'English' speech to be rated as more attractive than 'American' speech. Despite some inconsistencies, similar patterns found amongst L1 and L2 speakers suggest an inverse relationship between competence and social attractiveness; i.e. a speech variety is unlikely to score highly in both.

Related to prestige, Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) found that Austrian EFL learners perceived RP to be the most historically authentic variety of English speech. Mompeán González (2004: 247) reports a similar finding in Spain: 'a common popular belief amongst Spaniards is that the English pronunciation from England is the purest since the English language originated in England'. The majority of his participants (71%) wanted to learn a British accent, viewing it as 'authentic', 'original', 'pure' and 'underived' (Mompeán González 2004: 247).

Mompeán González's (2004) study highlights other attitudinal phenomena within the EFL university context in Spain. First, a standard-language ideology regarding RP; described as 'standard', 'correct', 'perfect' and 'right'. Second, positive affective responses to RP; described as the most 'pleasant-sounding' accent that participants 'like[d] the most'. Last, issues of intelligibility; RP was thought to be 'the easiest', 'clearest' and most 'familiar' accent. Albeit a minority (17%), some of Mompeán González's participants desired to learn an American accent. This was largely because it was thought to be more 'modern', 'widespread' and 'influential'. Many added that they were not only attracted to the accent but, also, to the USA itself. This resembles the findings of Flaitz (1993) in France and Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006) in Denmark, whose participants expressed a deep cultural fascination with the USA.

Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) suggested a link between preference for RP and geographical proximity to the UK. L2 speakers living in national contexts with strong geographical, social, cultural, political and/or economic ties to a particular L2 context may be more likely to visit there, live there and/or encounter L1 speakers from there through trade and tourism. Thus, for

example, EFL learners in Europe are more likely to view British English speech as useful and desirable, whereas EFL learners in Latin America are expected to favour American English speech. Though there is a general preference for RP within European EFL contexts, teachers and learners in other contexts often demonstrate an overall preference for GenAm speech. Japan, for example, has been shown to be America-centric as regards models and norms for English-language use (Kubota 1998).

Beyond evaluations of the societies and cultures that RP and GenAm represent, learners' attitudes often relate directly to their perceived linguistic quality. In Poland, for example, learners preferred RP but believed that it had a complex phonological system and that linguistic production in GenAm was easier (Janicka et al. 2008).

The ways in which social, cultural and linguistic factors interact in the teaching and learning of English will vary between learners and contexts. This investigation brings to light the ways in which EFL learners in Spain identify with the speech communities associated with RP and GenAm. It also ascertains learners' pronunciation preferences and goals, which may be used to inform EFL teaching in this context. Given the potential for teachers and learners to be misaligned in terms of accent preferences (Henderson et al. 2012), attitudinal data may aid the design of materials to suit learners' goals and to complement their independent efforts to acquire English. Instead of working counterproductively, EFL teachers and learners in Spain may, thus, work together to achieve pronunciation – and other linguistic – goals.

## **Methods**

To investigate the attitudes of EFL learners in Spain towards RP and GenAm, a verbal guise experiment was designed which elicited cognitive, affective and conative responses to speech stimuli. The verbal guise technique differs from the matched guise technique in that it employs different speakers, with similar profiles, to more accurately represent the speech varieties under investigation. Here, the inclusion of both male and female voices to test for evaluative differences according to speaker sex also necessitated the use of different speakers. The verbal guise experiment was embedded within a larger questionnaire and interview process. The following sections provide details of the sample participants and the design of the research instrument.

## **Participants**

Investigations into learners' attitudes towards varieties of English speech have largely been conducted with university students (Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997; Mompeán González 2004; Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006; McKenzie 2010). The attitudes of such participants are expected to be fully formed and relatively consistent, since attitudes are generally formed in adolescence and endure



throughout life (Bohner and Wänke 2002). University students were recruited for this study to enhance comparability of findings.

Participants were recruited from two institutions, the Universities of Salamanca (USal) and Valladolid (UVa). Both have similar profiles: they are public universities of similar sizes (approximately 25,000 and 30,000 students, respectively); they are located within the same region of Castile and Leon; and the English philology courses offered are similar, consisting of language classes (including phonetics and phonology), as well as literature and culture classes.

The sample comprised 71 Spanish nationals whose mother tongue was *castellano* and who were reading for English Philology or Translation and Interpreting degrees (USal, N=53, 75%; UVa, N=18, 25%). The minimum age was 19 and the maximum was 33, with a mean of 21 years. The minimum number of years that participants had spent learning English was two and the maximum was 18, with a mean of 12 years. All participants were undergraduate students across five years of study: 27% in first year (N=19), 52% in second year (N=37), 8% in third year (N=6), 7% in fourth year (N=5) and 6% in fifth year (N=4). 19 participants were male (27%) and 52 were female (73%). The higher ratio of female to male participants is representative of the sample population, owing to gendered practices whereby females are more likely to pursue EFL learning than males (Walker 1999; Henderson et al. 2012).

## Research instrument

Data were collected by means of questionnaire and interview. Participants were required to complete the questionnaire individually, first of all, which elicited background information along with their attitudinal responses in the verbal guise experiment. Participants were then interviewed in pairs, allowing them the opportunity to expand on responses given in the questionnaire.

The verbal guise experiment consisted of three parts. The first two required participants to rate RP and GenAm speech samples according to numerous traits and sentiments, and the last required them to rate their own linguistic behaviour in relation to the sample speakers. Since there are no universally relevant qualifiers in language attitude research (Garrett 2010), meaningful ones should be elicited from the sample population of interest. The qualifiers used in the present study were selected following a pilot study with 26 EFL learners at the University of Granada, Spain. The overall format of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix A.

Part one placed cognitive traits, and their polar opposites, on semantic differential scales (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum 1957). The most frequent traits in the pilot study, which were then selected for the main study, were *responsible*, *serious*, *confident*, *arrogant*, *calm*, *gentle*, *kind*, *intelligent* and *boring*. Evaluations

on these traits are cognitive insofar as they constitute thoughts and beliefs about the sample speech and speakers.

Part two placed affective sentiments on seven-point Likert scales. The most salient sentiments experienced by pilot participants, which were then included in the main study, were feelings of *liking*, *trust*, *boredom*, *identification*, *relaxation*, *interest*, *irritation* and *being overwhelmed*. This part focuses on the feelings and emotions experienced when exposed to the speech stimuli and, as such, elicits affective responses.

Part three elicited conative responses to RP and GenAm. Its purpose was to ascertain participants' perceptions of their own behavioural tendencies in relation to the speech represented in the stimuli. They were asked to rate, on seven-point scales, the extent to which they had, or made an effort to have, similar accents to the sample speakers.

RP and GenAm speech samples were created by recording university students in St Andrews, UK. Speakers were given a written text (see Appendix B), asked to rehearse it and reproduce it as naturally as possible. The benefit of a written text is that it minimises the risk of speakers communicating explicit social cues. Pre-existing texts, such as extracts from literary works, were avoided, as they would have been interpreted according to certain social and cultural schemata. The topic of studying at university was thought to be relevant and relatable to participants. The text was carefully designed so as not to imply any speaker profile; i.e. it could have been produced by someone of any age, sex, ethnicity, social status and who may or may not attend, or have attended, university.

From the larger database of 21 voices, four speakers were selected whose samples were thought to be comparable in terms of voice quality, intonation and speech rate. There were two male and two female voices, with a male and female representing RP and GenAm speech. The ages of the speakers were as follows: female RP, 19 years; male RP, 22 years; female GenAm, 31 years; and male GenAm, 19 years. The recordings varied only slightly in length (female RP, 30 seconds; male RP, 27 seconds; female GenAm, 29 seconds; male GenAm, 27 seconds). Each recording was played twice, so that participants would have sufficient exposure before marking their evaluations. The authenticity of the samples as representations of RP and GenAm speech was validated at an early stage by four listener-judges: two female L1 English speakers from Bristol, UK, and Washington, DC, and two male L1 English speakers from Bristol, UK, and Parma, OH.

There were several phonological features present in the speech samples which are generally thought to contrast between RP and GenAm. Notably, there were a number of instances of /t/, with [ɾ] and [t] as GenAm and RP variants. Another salient variable was /r/, with its rhotic [ɹ] and non-rhotic [Ø] variants. There were several realizations of [ɑ] and [ɒ] as variants of the open back vowel. The close back vowel [uː] and its occurrence with the palatal approximant, i.e. [juː], also featured prominently. Though less frequent, there was also variation in the use of [ʊ] and [ɔː] in 'your'; [oʊ] and [əʊ] in 'though' and 'local'; [ɪ] and [ɪə] in 'appeared'; and [e] and [eə] in 'where' and 'they're'.

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Speakers provided background information on their ages, places of birth, upbringing and residence, and occupations. They were also asked to describe their own speech in English, rather than the researcher subjectively ascribing labels and descriptions. The following excerpts are particularly illustrative:

*RP, female*

“‘well-spoken’ or sometimes people say I sound “southern”. I’d say I sound like people from southern England (Hampshire, Wiltshire, London. etc.), where everyone seems to have polished accents’.

*RP, male*

‘Generically English. Not a London accent but fairly southerly’.

*GenAm, female*

‘Midwestern and, in most cases, I sound like a typical Cleveland-area person’.

*GenAm, male*

‘Relatively non-descript Midwestern USA English’.

Three features are apparent in their perceptions of their own speech: the extent to which they consider their accents to be regional, to be mainstream and to have status. The RP speakers both associate their accents with the south of England and the GenAm speakers with the American Midwest. The female speakers associate their speech with particular localities, for example, Hampshire, Wiltshire, London and Cleveland. The male speakers describe their speech as generic and non-descript, implying that it represents standard, mainstream or neutral speech. The female RP speaker links her ‘southern’ speech to notions of correctness and prestige through the qualifiers ‘well-spoken’ and ‘polished’. As such, her evaluative responses are consistent with the standard-language ideology that exists amongst L1 speakers of English in the UK (Milroy and Milroy 1999).

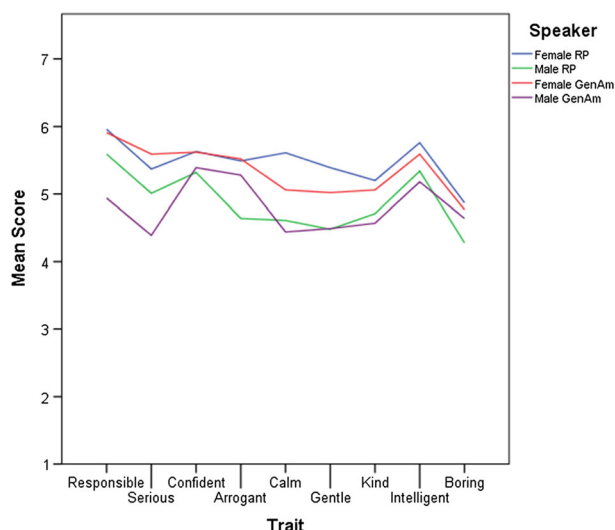
## Results and discussion

### Cognitive evaluations

The mean ratings of the sample speakers on each of the cognitive traits are shown in Table 1. Mean ratings on all cognitive traits are ranked in descending

**Table 1** Mean evaluations (and standard deviations) on all traits (N= 71)

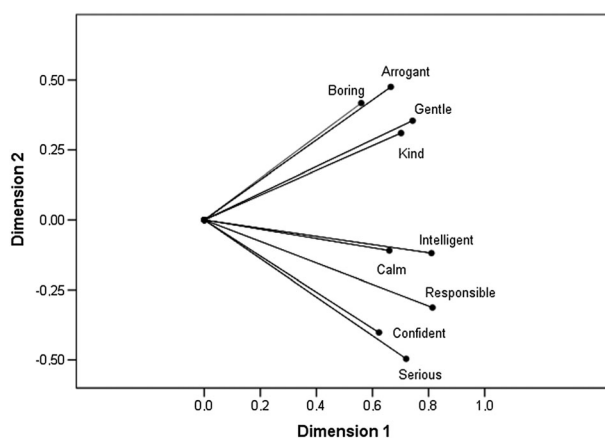
Female RP	5.47	(0.855)
Female GenAm	5.34	(0.913)
Male RP	4.88	(0.956)
Male GenAm	4.82	(1.095)



**Figure 1.** Cognitive evaluations on each trait

order. Female speakers were rated more positively, overall, and RP speakers were rated more positively when grouped by speaker sex (see Figure 1).

To test whether the data could be reduced to underlying evaluative dimensions, ratings were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA). This revealed the existence of two components (eigenvalues > 1) which, together, accounted for 62.39% of the variance (49.578% and 12.811%, respectively). The component loadings shown in Figure 2 confirm that the traits represent two distinct evaluative dimensions. These are interpreted as competence (*intelligent, calm, responsible, confident and serious*) and social attractiveness (*boring, arrogant, gentle*).



**Figure 2.** Output from principal components analysis (PCA)

and *kind*), as in previous investigations. The mean evaluations of the four sample speakers on each dimension are ranked in Table 2 in descending order. The rankings of the female speakers were consistent but the male RP speaker was rated as more competent and the male GenAm speaker as more socially attractive. This inverse relationship is in keeping with the findings of previous research using male speakers (e.g., Rindal 2010).

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean evaluations of each of the speakers on both dimensions. The results showed a significant overall effect: Mauchly's test,  $p < 0.05$ , multivariate test statistics were employed;  $F_{(7,63)} = 8.97$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; Wilks' Lambda = 0.501; partial eta squared = 0.499. Pairwise comparisons (using Bonferroni) revealed that both RP speakers were rated as more competent than socially attractive ( $p < 0.05$ ). There were no significant differences between ratings of GenAm speakers. Extreme responses to RP speech/speakers suggest that they are either thought to be very competent or very socially unattractive. This characterisation of RP by L2 speakers resembles L1 speakers' attitudes towards standard accents and the more balanced characterisation of GenAm, sometimes seen here as more socially attractive, is reminiscent of L1 speakers' attitudes towards non-standard accents. This creates a dichotomy between RP and GenAm, with the former viewed as standard and prestigious and the latter as non-standard and socially attractive. Qualitative questionnaire data support this standard-language ideology, with one participant stating that British English is 'more correct than American English' (E05). As noted earlier, the existence of a standard-language ideology has also been witnessed by Mompeán González (2004) in Spain.

Building on the above findings and previous findings (Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997; Mompeán González 2004), there is qualitative support for the influence of historical authenticity and geographical proximity on learners' attitudes. Starting with historical authenticity, one participant describes RP as 'the pure English' (D12) and another offers his perspective on why English should be learnt with a British accent:

**Table 2** Mean evaluations (and standard deviations) on each dimension (N=71)

<b>Competence</b>		
Female RP	5.67	(1.015)
Female GenAm	5.54	(1.033)
Male RP	5.16	(1.189)
Male GenAm	4.87	(1.214)
<b>Social attractiveness</b>		
Female RP	5.19	(1.049)
Female GenAm	5.10	(1.172)
Male GenAm	4.76	(1.169)
Male RP	4.54	(1.267)

Well, from my own experience in Spanish, when I listen to the American Spanish people speaking Spanish, I don't like very much that accent. So, that's an argument in order to try to learn the British accent because I think that English people will think the same. What is this guy doing speaking American English whens [sic] he could speak the British accent? I would think the same if a guy from Liverpool, for instance, is learning the American Spanish accent. (B04)

The above interview excerpt demonstrates that the participant's ideology regarding standard and authentic Spanish has influenced the value he places on English speech varieties. Moving to geographical proximity, one participant claims to 'feel closer to UK' (F02) and another links this factor with language attitudes:

Since Great Britain is closer in distance, I feel [RP] may be a little more useful professionally. (E01)

In Spain, it has already been shown that English is considered to be useful for fulfilling career purposes (Ibarraran et al. 2008). Yet, the quality of being 'useful professionally' characterises RP, in particular, as having important instrumental benefits. Although Mompeán González's (2004: 247) participants considered GenAm to be 'modern', 'widespread' and 'influential', participants here emphasised the practical functions of RP:

I think British is more professional while American is urban. (C05)

for my future job, British English is better. (C09)

British English would be more adequate [sic] for me to work as a teacher. (D06)

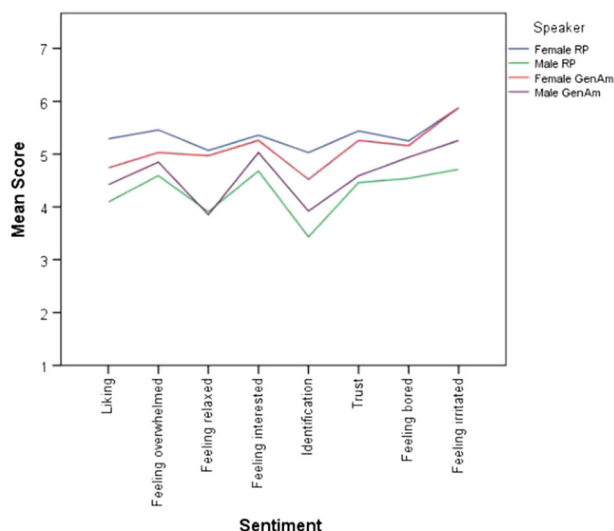
for serious stuff, I prefer to get as close as I can to RP. (E03)

Comments of this type suggest that RP is considered to have formal and functional associations and GenAm to fulfil informal and interpersonal functions.

## Affective evaluations

The mean ratings of the sample speakers on each of the affective sentiments are shown in Figure 3. Mean ratings of each speaker on all affective sentiments are ranked in descending order in Table 3. The ratings and rankings show that participants felt more positively towards speakers that they deemed to be socially attractive. This is unsurprising, since the term 'social attractiveness' is used interchangeably with 'solidarity' in language attitude research. Remarkably, RP received the most positive and negative affective evaluations.





**Figure 3.** Affective evaluations on each sentiment

**Table 3** Mean evaluations (and standard deviations) on all sentiments (N=71)

Female RP	5.35	(0.929)
Female GenAm	5.11	(0.978)
Male GenAm	4.58	(1.214)
Male RP	4.29	(1.113)

Some qualitative comments from the questionnaire demonstrated explicit affective evaluations (e.g., 'I love British accent' (D04)), whilst others revealed a cultural fascination, as reported in other studies (Flaitz 1993; Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006):

I find British culture much more interesting than American culture. (D04)

I love England and I would like to live there because I like its form of thinking, being, so on. I love the weather. To sum up, all things about England. (G06)

Contrary to previous findings, these comments suggest a fascination with English/British, rather than American culture. Whilst the above comments express a general cultural fascination, others show a particular fascination with American cultural products:

The TV series and music I watch/listen is often in American English. (C05)

When it is about series and films, the United States win. (F02)

Regardless of which culture or cultural products are preferred, the above provides further evidence that the social and cultural meanings attached to speech varieties ought to be taken into account when investigating language attitudes.

## Conative evaluations

Mirroring cognitive and affective evaluations, participants' conative responses to female speakers were more positive, overall. Yet, there are remarkable differences between the pronunciations that participants think they have and those that they are aiming towards. Whilst they believe themselves to speak similarly to the female speakers, they consider themselves to be aiming towards the speech of the RP speakers. Thus, pronunciation goals appear to be more accent- than speaker-oriented. These differences are clear from the rankings in Table 4.

It is compelling that participants considered themselves to have similar pronunciations to the speakers that they rated as more socially attractive and felt more positively towards. This is interpreted as an outcome of the psychological process of similarity attraction, which triggers linguistic convergence and prompts speakers to express solidarity through their speech (Spencer-Oatey 2008).

Participants' behavioural tendencies and preferences appear to be linked with their perceptions of the linguistic quality of the two speech varieties, especially their perceived intelligibility and ease of production. Participants often preferred a speech variety because they thought it was easier to understand:

it is easier for me to understand the American accent. (E06)

I understand [GenAm] better than British English. (B03)

I can understand [RP] better [and] I prefer the British accent to the American one. (D02)

**Table 4** Mean evaluations (and standard deviations) of conative responses (N=71)

When speaking in English, I have a pronunciation similar to Speaker X.		
Female RP	3.42	(1.670)
Female GenAm	3.34	(1.594)
Male GenAm	3.01	(1.617)
Male RP	2.77	(1.475)
When speaking in English, I make a conscious effort to have a pronunciation similar to Speaker X.		
Female RP	5.07	(1.854)
Male RP	4.51	(1.970)
Female GenAm	4.39	(1.923)
Male GenAm	4.04	(1.923)

Though there was disagreement as to which speech variety was easier to understand, participants generally agreed that it was easier to produce GenAm speech:

I think American it's easier to achieve for a Spanish speaker. (C04)

This suggests that, similar to Janicka et al.'s (2008) findings in Poland, these participants believed RP to have a more complex phonology than GenAm. This raises the question of why participants would aim towards RP and suggests that their motivations are social and cultural, rather than linguistic.

## Overall attitudes

Participants' attitude scores were computed by weighting their cognitive, affective and conative scores by the importance they placed on what they thought of the speakers, how they felt towards them and whether they spoke, or attempted to speak, like them. Their overall attitudes do not reveal a great deal; it is more insightful to focus on the complexities and inconsistencies of the underlying attitudinal components. Interestingly, the output of a one-way repeated measures ANOVA suggests that the affective component carried significantly more weight than the cognitive component: Mauchly's test,  $p < 0.05$ , multivariate test statistics were employed;  $F_{(2,69)} = 4.27$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; Wilks' Lambda = 0.890; partial eta squared = 0.110. This finding supports the notion that the affective component is the strongest (Perloff 2003). Although cognitive evaluations have been central to language attitude research, their contribution to these participants' overall attitudes is overshadowed by affective evaluations.

Here, the overall tendency towards RP is mainly owing to beliefs about its status and suitability as a model for emulation (as in Ladegaard 1998 and Janicka et al. 2008). Relatively positive overall ratings for GenAm are mainly owing to beliefs about it being socially attractive (as in Rindal 2010), strong affiliative feelings towards its speakers and the positive matching of participants' own speech to GenAm.

## Conclusions

This paper investigated the language attitudes of EFL learners towards RP and GenAm speech. It provides original data from Spain, a context which has received very little attention so far but which places increasing importance on EFL learning and teaching.

The findings provide further evidence that cognitive evaluations of speech are based on two dimensions: competence and social attractiveness. Within this EFL context, RP and GenAm exhibit a dichotomous relationship. Whilst RP occupies the high-status position and GenAm the low-status position, the latter often rates more highly than the former for solidarity. Spanish participants generally desire to emulate RP speech and the overall preference for RP is consistent with findings from other European contexts.

This study hopes to offer a more theoretically informed working definition of 'language attitude' and to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological processes involved in speech evaluation. It shows that the affective attitudinal component merits greater attention and provides empirical evidence to support the link understood to exist between this component and social attractiveness (Garrett et al. 1999). A novel, yet unsurprising, finding is that learners reported speaking similarly to individuals with whom they expressed greater solidarity. Despite this, they generally reported aspiring towards RP speech (as in Janicka et al. 2008). The discrepancy between participants' perceptions of their own speech and their aspirations towards a reference accent is similar to the discrepancy between fascination with one speech variety and culture but the desire to emulate another speech variety (Flaitz 1993; Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006).

There are several limitations in the present study. Notably, the confounding effect of speaker sex highlights the need for further investigation into this variable (also noted in Bayard 1991 and McKenzie 2010). Also, the relatively small sample size means that the findings of the study are not generalisable. Further research, both within and beyond Spain, would aid the interpretation of the attitudinal phenomena discussed here. Another limitation is that this study focused exclusively on RP and GenAm speech. It would be interesting to elicit Spanish EFL learners' attitudes towards other accents of English, including inner-circle 'standard' and 'non-standard' varieties, outer- and expanding-circle varieties and, more specifically, Spanish-accented English.

This investigation has shown that the attitudes held by EFL learners towards reference accents are complex and dynamic. Understanding what learners' language attitudes are and how they function may be used to enhance EFL learning through the use and design of appropriate materials. Participants in this Spanish context favoured RP when thinking rationally and gauging their own speech but tended towards GenAm when responding emotionally. Thus, EFL learners at university in Spain may benefit from using RP as a reference accent within the classroom to achieve their instrumental goals but may optimise their learning beyond the classroom by using GenAm speech, engaging with GenAm speakers and consuming American cultural products.

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## Appendix A: format of questionnaire

### Part 1: cognitive measures

I think Speaker One sounds	responsible <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	not responsible <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	not serious <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	serious <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	confident <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	not confident <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	not arrogant <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	arrogant <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	calm <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	not calm <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	not gentle <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	gentle <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	kind <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	not kind <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	not intelligent <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	intelligent <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>
I think Speaker One sounds	boring <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	not boring <input type="radio"/>	I'm not sure <input type="radio"/>

Part 2: affective measures

When I listen to Speaker One, I feel...				
	strongly agree		strongly disagree	I'm not sure
that I like him/her	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
that I trust him/her	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
bored	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
that I can identify with him/her	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relaxed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
interested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
overwhelmed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
irritated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Part 3: conative measures

When speaking in English, I have a pronunciation similar to Speaker One.						
certainly false	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	certainly true

When speaking in English, I make a conscious effort to have a pronunciation similar to Speaker One.						
certainly true	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	certainly false

## Appendix B: text designed for recordings

A lot of people think it's difficult to study at university. On the one hand, it can be difficult to get used to the new people and responsibilities in your life but, on the other, it can be good for building self-esteem. It all comes down to your attitude. It is definitely true, though, that students will have fun on iTunes and YouTube instead of handing in assignments when they're due. Where I live, the local bars have student nights on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which are popular. One appeared on the news for winning a nationwide competition. Who knew it was possible.